

MEMORANDUM

TO: Carol Kowalski, Director of Planning & Community Development

FROM: Judi Barrett

DATE: August 16, 2013

SUBJECT: Progress Report; Public Participation

Per your request, I am providing a progress report on the master plan public participation process. Following our first report to you (June 19, 2013), we tabulated the online survey results and interviewed more stakeholders. This memo summarizes the survey and interviews: tasks that have been completed. In addition, the Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) has formed working groups to develop draft goals for the master plan, and earlier this month they worked with Ezra Glenn on developing a master plan vision. These efforts will continue into the fall.

Please distribute this to the MPAC. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me at (617) 455-8641 or by email at jbarrett@rkgassociates.com.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

A. Online Survey

In May 2013, RKG posted a simple questionnaire on Survey Monkey so that residents could rate and comment on key ideas from the World Café (October 2012). The survey remained available online until June 28, 2013. Below is a summary of the survey responses. (A list of “other” ideas from respondents is on file with the Planning Department.)

1. Question: What do you value about Arlington?

Response	Rating Average	Response Count
Convenient location	4.62	1,174
Minuteman Bikepath	4.40	1,170
It's walkable	4.39	1,168
Family friendly	4.21	1,166
Perfect mix of urban, suburban, and small town	4.13	1,164
Good open space and recreation	4.11	1,169
Good schools	4.09	1,164
Good public transit	4.08	1,171
Sense of community	4.04	1,169
Historic character	3.90	1,166
Demographic diversity	3.55	1,163
Easy to participate in government	3.52	1,164
Other (total number of “other” comments)	135	135

2. Question: What do you want to encourage in Arlington in the future?

Response	Rating Average	Response Count
New businesses: for diversifying the tax base	4.15	1,161
Better maintenance of existing open space	4.03	1,156
New businesses: for employment growth	3.96	1,159
New businesses: for shopping	3.93	1,152
More open space	3.83	1,138
Reduce our carbon footprint	3.76	1,149
More recreational opportunities	3.65	1,153
Demographic diversity	3.64	1,153
More cultural opportunities	3.61	1,149
More community centers and gathering spaces	3.60	1,147
More parking in commercial centers	3.46	1,157
More night life	3.35	1,158
More affordable housing	3.28	1,146
Other (total number of “other” comments)	220	220

In general, the survey respondents gave high marks to the same qualities that World Café participants said they value about Arlington. In addition, many respondents made a point of mentioning (ideas submitted under “Other”) libraries and cultural opportunities as highly valued features of the Town.

B. Stakeholder Interviews

From mid-May to the end of July 2013, 61 people participated in the stakeholder interview process for Arlington’s master plan. The interviewees were identified by Planning and Community Development (PCD) staff. RKG’s team conducted most of the interviews, but Carol Kowalski, Planning Director, conducted several over the summer and observed almost all of the consulting team’s interviews as well. Appendix A contains a list of participants in the stakeholder interview process.

Stakeholder interviews can help the master plan consultants learn a great deal about the town from residents with different backgrounds. The interviews are not intended to be an “all-inclusive” effort, i.e., during this initial consultation process, not everyone with knowledge of Arlington or experience in the community’s civic or social life can be interviewed, and not every point of view can be represented. The goal is *variety* of experiences and opinions. Typically, stakeholder interviews involve 25 or 30 people; in Arlington, the process included twice as many.

In most cases, the interviews for Arlington followed a protocol with six questions:

- What attracts people to Arlington? (Why do people move here? Why do they stay?)
- What issues do you think we are likely to hear about during the master plan process?
- What has changed in Arlington during the time that you’ve lived in the town?
- What do you hope will come out of the master plan process?
- Given what you know about what’s happening around Arlington (in the region), do you see any conditions or circumstances that might have an impact on Arlington’s plan? Are there external forces – good or bad – that may need to be accounted for in the master plan?
- Is there anything else you’d like to say about Arlington that our questions didn’t give you an opportunity to share? Something important that you think we should know about?

For purposes of this memo, we have highlighted observations and opinions that tended to be mentioned by many interviewees. It is not surprising to find some recurring themes in a process that involved so many people. The additional interviews conducted after our last report (June 19, 2013) largely reinforce what we heard during the first round of interviews, with some exceptions. We acknowledge that focusing on commonly held ideas runs the risk of appearing to dismiss other important ideas simply because they did not come up very often. However, we *do* pay attention to all of the information we learn from stakeholders even if we do not cite them in a summary report such as this.

1. What attracts people to Arlington? Why do they stay?

The interview groups frequently mentioned these qualities of the Town:

- Convenient location (relative to Boston, Cambridge, Rte. 128 employment centers)
- Great schools
- Relatively affordable (relative to other communities nearby)
- Strong sense of civic pride
- Friendly, safe,
- Walkable

2. What issues do you think we are likely to hear about during the master plan process?

- Traffic – particularly on Mass. Ave.
- Loss of commercial tax base and excessive dependence on residential taxpayers
- Rezoning of commercial/industrial property to residential use
- The Mass. Ave. project
- Inadequate parking
- Flooding
- Mugar property
- Problems with credibility/trust in town government
- Divisiveness between “old” and “new” Arlington
- Loss of affordability

3. What has changed in Arlington during the time that you’ve lived in the town?

- Restaurants (number and variety)
- No longer a “dry” town
- Bike path
- More diversity: ethnic, racial, faith, household and family types
- More “white collar” today than in the past
- Higher housing prices
- Town is more vibrant, with many citizen activists

4. What do you hope will come out of the master plan process?

- A clear, realistic plan for economic growth
- Strategy(ies) to promote tourism
- Solutions to the parking shortage
- Plan to address Arlington’s flooding problems
- Commitment to explore regionalization of services
- Better zoning
- More support for businesses

5. Given what you know about what’s happening around Arlington (in the region), do you see any conditions or circumstances that might have an impact

on Arlington's plan? Are there external forces – good or bad – that may need to be accounted for in the master plan?

- Development along Route 2, Route 128
- Regional transportation improvements, e.g., Green Line extension
- Proposed casino (Everett)
- Regional competition for businesses, e.g., Kendall Square
- Opportunities for heritage tourism development

6. Is there anything else you'd like to say about Arlington that our questions didn't give you an opportunity to share? Something important that you think we should know about?

- Town needs to address beautification (gateways, commercial areas)
- Businesses should stay open later (increase night life in Arlington)

Attachment A Stakeholder Interviews

May 2013

Interviewer: Judi Barrett, RKG

- Stuart Belden
- John Fanciullo
- John Leone
- Brucie Moulton
- Diane Mahon, Selectman

Interviewer: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis, Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc.

- Steve Makowka
- Christine Carney
- Charles Foskett
- Richard Fraiman
- Ed Starr
- Phil Chaves
- Jenn Tripp

Interviewers: Peter D. Sanborn, Courtney Synowiec, Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

- Scott Smith
- David White
- Jane Howard
- Leland Stein
- Alan Jones
- Peter Howard
- Sam D'Agostino

Interviewer: Patti Kelleher, Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

- Clarissa Rowe
 - Donna Janis
 - Richard Keshian
 - Kathleen Darcy
 - Jill Mirak
 - Bob Mirak
 - Bob Bowes
 - Jan Whitted
 - Christine Scypinski
 - Bruce Fitzgerald
 - Steve Biagioni
 - Adam Auster
 - JoAnn Robinson
- 

- John Belskis
- John Worden
- Barbara Popolow
- Brian Rehrig
- Danuta Forbes
- Mike Byrne
- Bernard Wadsworth
- Chris Doyle
- Lynn Bishop
- Mary Deyst
- Eric Helmuth
- Tom Zaloum
- Carolyn Boettner
- Chuck Pappas

Interviewer: David Gamble, Gamble Associates

- Steve Byrne, Selectman
- Kevin Greeley, Selectman
- Maria Romano
- Mike Cayer
- Joe Curro, Selectman
- Dan Dunn, Chair, Board of Selectmen

June 2013

Interviewer: Carol Kowalski

- Ed Davidson
- Aram Holman
- Cindy Curran
- Mary Winstanley O'Connor
- Jack Jones

July 2013

Interviewer: Patti Kelleher

- Gary Tibbets
- Richard Langone
- Elsie Fiore
- Ronald Chaput
- Steve Harrington

Interviewer: Carol Kowalski

- Chris Loreti

